

INTRODUCTION

- 9.1 Witney, a historic market town, is the largest centre of population in West Oxfordshire. Its population has virtually doubled over the last 30 years to its present 23,000 residents.
- 9.2 The area covered by the Witney Inset Maps and this Chapter includes not only the town of Witney but parts of the adjoining parishes of Curbridge, Hailey, South Leigh and Ducklington. On 1st April 2001 some land in these adjoining parishes (apart from Ducklington) containing areas already developed or committed for development in previous local plans transferred to Witney.
- 9.3 This Review Plan rolls forward many proposals from the 1997 adopted Plan, particularly the North East Development Area and associated highway proposals.

HOUSING

- 9.4 With a present housing stock of about 9,000 dwellings in Witney, the Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2011 makes provision for about 2,700 additional dwellings to be built in the town during the period 1996 to 2011. The replacement Structure Plan 2016 rolls forward this provision with about 3,000 dwellings for the period 2011 to 2016. Between 1996 and 2001 the building rate in Witney was low (275 dwellings built) primarily because of delay in implementation of the North East Witney Development Area whilst provision for adequate levels of supporting infrastructure was being secured. In the four years up to 2005 the building rate increased significantly with 875 dwellings built.

Sites within the existing urban area

- 9.5 Identification of additional sites needed to meet the Structure Plan requirement began with an urban capacity study of Witney. This investigated all significant areas of undeveloped or under-used land within the town, reappraised existing local plan allocations and examined the supply of new housing likely to be created from small scale development taking into account past trends. Additional housing will arise from redevelopment of small sites, increased densities

within existing residential areas, greater use of upper floors in the central area and from some redevelopment of existing employment sites which reach the end of their useful life during the plan period.

- 9.6 The 2000 urban capacity study suggested 1,936-2,360 dwellings could be built during the plan period within the existing urban areas of Witney (including dwellings completed and areas already committed for development). This study was successively reviewed and has showed an increased urban capacity.

Urban expansion

- 9.7 Taking into account
- upper levels of the identified urban capacity range may not be deliverable
 - the limited supply of older employment sites that could be redeveloped for housing
 - lack of small sites on the fringes of the town that are free of planning constraints
 - the need to secure major improvements to Witney's infrastructure
 - need to identify longer term supply of residential building land beyond current plan period to meet Government objectives,

the Council concluded that the most appropriate way forward is to identify a comprehensive mixed use development area as a reserve site which would provide not only for housing but also for employment, educational and other supporting local facilities and for improved transport infrastructure.

- 9.8 This Plan proposes an urban extension towards Downs Road, Curbridge. This reserve site is the most effective overall planning solution to help meet Witney's needs in the longer term. However, residential development at North Curbridge will only be permitted prior to 2011 or a review of the plan strategy if there is demonstrated to be an overriding need for earlier release.

**Figure 9.1 Housing Provision In Witney
1996 - 2001 - 2011**

Position at 1 April 2005 - Witney		
	Number of Dwellings 1996 - 2001	Number of Dwellings 2001-2011
Completions	275	875
Dwellings remaining to be built at:		
NE Development Area*		540
Burford Road North (Early's Mill)		219
Bridge Street Mills		176
Other outstanding planning consents		212
Additional development on unidentified sites		100-150
Allocations (subject to Policy H1):		
Newland (6)*		20
Cogges (7)*		46
West of High Street (13)*		200
Buttercross Works (5)		50
Witney Total	275	2,438-2,488
Reserve Site - North Curbridge Development Area (8)		
* Sites remaining from the 1997 adopted Local Plan (Proposal numbers are in brackets)		
Note: under the Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2016, the pro-rata housing provision for Witney 2001-2011 is about 2,000 dwellings.		

Housing Proposals

Sites within the existing urban area

- 9.9 At 1 April 2005 over 900 dwellings remained to be completed at three large development sites listed in Figure 9.1 and shown on the Witney Inset Maps. Specific allocations for future development and the North Curbridge reserve site also listed in Figure 9.1 are described in the following pages. The mixed use West of High Street proposal is set out in the later section on the Central Area.

Proposal 5 - Station Lane, Witney

The Buttercross Works and the adjoining bungalow site, off Station Lane, are allocated for:

- a) employment; or
- b) a mixed use development of part employment and part housing to accommodate about 50 dwellings, together with structural landscape areas.

- 9.10 This site is currently occupied by part employment/part retail uses with one residential property and is screened by a substantial area of trees covered by a tree preservation order. A detailed tree survey will be required in order to identify the precise boundaries of the site available for development. Redevelopment wholly for employment uses appropriate to this location is acceptable. However, an element of housing to accommodate about 50 dwellings would be acceptable alongside employment to create a mixed use development. New development on this site will be expected to enhance the setting of the Conservation Area. Vehicular access will be taken only from Station Lane with improvements to the pedestrian and cycle network in the area, including the existing route along the northern boundary. The developer will be required to prepare a detailed planning brief for approval by the Local Planning Authority. Investigations will be required to demonstrate sufficient sewerage capacity before development is permitted.

Proposal 6 - Newland, Witney

Prior to the development of the housing site at Newland as defined on the Witney Inset Map, satisfactory replacement allotment gardens are to be provided.

- 9.11 These allotments (about 0.5 ha) are the remaining part of a much larger residential allocation now developed. Up to 20 dwellings could be accommodated. New replacement allotments are to be provided within the North East Witney Development Area. The existing allotments will not be released for development until alternative provision is available and the requirements of Phasing Policy H1 are met.

Urban expansion

- 9.12 Two proposals remain from the 1997 Local Plan on the eastern side of Witney – the major mixed use development area at North East Witney (Madley Park) and small housing site at Cogges adjacent to the land safeguarded for the Cogges Link Road (Proposal 7). Madley Park (as shown on the Proposals Map) is under construction and is expected to accommodate about 1,100 dwellings, plus supporting facilities, when fully completed.

Proposal 7 - Cogges, Witney

The land between the eastern section of the Cogges Link Road and the Cogges housing area is allocated for open space (3.0 hectares), and housing (1.4 hectares). The release of the land for housing and open space will be dependent on securing the development of the Cogges Link Road as shown on the Witney Inset Map.

- 9.13 There is a significant area of land left between the new Cogges development and the eastern section of the proposed Cogges Link Road (i.e 4.4 hectares). It is proposed that the majority of this area should be allocated as amenity open space, with approximately 1.4 hectares developed for housing to provide some 46 dwellings. This area was first allocated in the 1997 Plan. The Council resolved to grant

planning permission in 2002 with a requirement that the development is not built until the Cogges Link Road has planning permission.

- 9.14 The small pocket of housing is located where the proposed Cogges Link Road would be furthest away from the eastern edge of the existing houses. This area is relatively low lying compared to land to the north and therefore the additional housing will not form an intrusive skyline development. An existing hedgerow and hedgerow trees with a public footpath define the northern boundary of the allocated housing site. This area can be well integrated into the existing pedestrian network.
- 9.15 The land will only be released for housing when the Cogges Link Road and adjoining open space has been secured, together with adequate screening/noise mitigation measures along the eastern boundary.
- 9.16 The proposed 3.0 hectare area of open space forms a logical extension of the open space running from Cogges Museum to Cogges Hill. It will also provide a buffer and setting to Cogges when viewed from the proposed Link Road. This area should be laid out for amenity use and informal recreation, incorporating existing hedgerows and trees.

Reserve Land for Future Urban Expansion

- 9.17 After reviewing the options available for development on the fringe of Witney, the Council concluded that land to the west of Deer Park Road is the most appropriate direction of growth if Witney is to physically expand in order to continue to meet the bulk of future housing requirements in the District. As the Local Plan progressed through its stages, it became clear from monitoring of housing land supply that only a small (if any) contribution to that supply was likely to be needed from a new urban extension to ensure Structure Plan housing targets for 2011 would be met. However, longer term planning necessitates identification of land reserves beyond the current local plan period in order to minimise the possibility of interruptions in housing supply and demonstrate a 10 year supply of housing land from adoption of the Plan. The needs of Witney beyond 2011 will be further considered in the future Local Development Framework.
- 9.18 The North Curbridge Development Area is allocated as a reserve site for comprehensive mixed use development to be released as and when required. The area is likely to accommodate in the order of 800 dwellings although the precise number will be determined by the needs of the town and strategic housing requirements at the time planning permission is granted. This allocation recognises the long lead-in time involved before major Development Areas and associated infrastructure are delivered on the ground. The timing of land release will be controlled through Policy H1.

Proposal 8 - North Curbridge Development Area, Witney

An area for comprehensive mixed use development is allocated to the west of Witney as defined on the Witney Inset Map. This area will be held in reserve for development in accordance with the Phasing Policy H1. Proposals will be permitted within this area provided that they:

- i. are part of a comprehensive scheme for the whole site, incorporating the range of land uses and associated infrastructure needed for a new community;
- ii. demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority that the development will result in a positive addition to Witney;
- iii. provide for residential development (to include Use Classes C2 and C3) at not less than an average net residential density of 35 dwellings per hectare;
- iv. include a minimum of 30% affordable housing;
- v. provide for employment which shall include an element of "live/work units" and, where need exists, provision for hotel/conference facilities;
- vi. include a primary school and local shopping, community, health and leisure facilities, with public playing fields and associated changing room facilities;
- vii. provide for wider education and community needs generated by the development;
- viii. ensure a new A40 junction at Downs Road is either completed or under construction no later than commencement of the first phase of development at North Curbridge;
- ix. provide for supporting transport infrastructure, including proposals to mitigate the impact of traffic associated with the development, and incorporating a comprehensive network for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport with links to adjoining areas;
- x. incorporate appropriate noise attenuation measures to mitigate traffic noise;
- xi. incorporate measures to mitigate the impact of the development upon the environment, including the planting of new areas of woodland and the protection and enhancement of features of nature conservation and landscape value;
- xii. provide for phasing of the development in accordance with the requirements of the development plan and the provision of the necessary improvement to the area's infrastructure and facilities.

- 9.19 The North Curbridge Development Area defined on the Witney Inset Map covers some 83 hectares, including land adjacent to Range Road and Deer Park Road which is laid out for balancing ponds and open space. These amenity areas are to be retained and fully integrated into the new development. The defined Development Area also includes land safeguarded for the proposed A40 junction, whether this should be grade separated or an at grade junction. The detailed design remains to be approved. The safeguarded land is necessary to satisfactorily accommodate the slip roads, associated earthworks and significant areas of woodland planting to help soften the visual impact of the new interchange. Provision of a new junction serving traffic flows to and from the east, together with improved public transport links is an essential and early requirement to provide satisfactory access to this development area (see also Policy T4).
- 9.20 Although the North Curbridge area is relatively distant from Witney town centre, excellent access to the main road network and associated bus services will be available via the Curbridge Road and the A40/Downs Road junction.
- 9.21 Detailed proposals for implementation of the Development Area should seek to achieve a sustainable, viable local community with good links to existing and proposed facilities in Witney. Under Policy BE1 the Council will seek to secure planning obligations in respect of any identified shortfall in local supporting infrastructure. The developer will be expected to prepare a comprehensive planning brief for approval by the Council as supplementary planning guidance prior to any development on the site. The brief will include a design framework for the area to show how the proposed development will create a high quality built environment and meet the objectives and policies of this Plan. An archaeological assessment of the site will be required.
- 9.22 Overall, the Council concluded that development at North Curbridge would have a lesser impact from both a landscape and ecological point of view than development of other fringe areas. However, the chief landscape concerns are the achievement of a new and sympathetic western edge to Witney, protection of the setting of Curbridge village and mitigation of the development upon the wider landscape. As a consequence, a substantial landscape edge to the south and west will be required, as well as planting belts within the site to provide additional screening of development on the higher ground.
- 9.23 Significant areas of new woodland planting will be necessary. The existing ancient woodland in the north west corner is a very important screening and back drop feature, and should be retained and supplemented. Measures will be required to safeguard the habitat of protected species on the site. Hedges should be retained wherever possible in accordance with Policy NE6, and especially along the bridleway running through the Development Area. This bridleway, together with structural landscape areas, should form a green corridor across the site linking the town with the open countryside beyond.
- 9.24 The new woodland areas, together with other appropriate measures, will help to mitigate traffic noise from the adjoining A40, A4095 and Downs Road. Development along Curbridge Road (A4095) should be designed to secure a soft rural approach into the built-up area with buildings seen within a well landscaped setting. This area is not appropriate for family housing but may accommodate a nursing home, prestige offices or a hotel.
- 9.25 Within a strong landscape framework, residential and employment development and associated land uses will be provided as set out in Proposal 8. Development of the residential areas will deliver a wide mix of dwelling size, type and affordability, including appropriate provision for elderly and disabled persons. The residential areas will be developed at not less than an average net residential density of 35 dwellings per hectare. The Council will seek a minimum of 30% affordable housing.

EMPLOYMENT

- 9.26 The amount, location and phasing of any new land releases for employment in Witney is for this Plan to decide. The Oxfordshire Structure Plan makes no specific provision for Witney but seeks:
- to achieve an appropriate balance between the number and type of jobs and the size and skills of the local workforce; and
 - to provide for the expansion and relocation of existing local firms and to accommodate firms which need to be located in the area.
- 9.27 The Structure Plan recognises the draw of Oxford as a major attraction for employment resulting in large inflows of commuters. Although the Plan encourages the provision of employment opportunities in the Witney area for the local population, this does not include growth of a scale which encourages significant commuting into the area or which attracts large footloose firms.

Employment Proposals

- 9.28 The main areas for future employment opportunities in Witney lie on the western fringes. Land remains available within the large employment areas off Downs Road and at Coral Springs. Provision to meet the longer term employment needs has been made within the North Curbridge Development Area. Any additional need for employment development during the plan period will be assessed against the general employment and other policies of the Plan.

Proposal 9 - Employment Land, Downs Road, Witney

The following sites as shown on the Witney Inset Map are allocated for employment uses:

- West of Downs Road (2.3ha) with peripheral structural landscape areas;
- East of Downs Road (10ha).

- 9.29 Both allocated areas of land remain from the much larger employment area allocated in the 1997 Local Plan now largely developed. A landscape belt will be required along the northern and western boundaries of the land to the west of Downs Road in order to mitigate the impact of development upon the surrounding landscape and neighbouring properties. Substantial areas of structural landscape are already in place adjoining the allocated land to the east of Downs Road.

Proposal 10 - Coral Springs Policy Area, Witney

The Council will permit specialist and limited development on the Coral Springs Policy Area for non residential uses that would either be inappropriate elsewhere in the Plan area or that would be demonstrably of benefit and service to the town, provided that:

- the development comprises a well-designed building or group of buildings in an extremely well landscaped setting, and
 - the mainly open character of the land between Curbridge Road and the A40 is maintained, with the provision of substantial new planting to soften the appearance of this urban edge.
- 9.30 The Council has approved a planning brief to guide development on this site and granted outline planning permission in 2004 for a scheme comprising BI offices, a day nursery, health care centre and public house.

TRANSPORT

- 9.31 The main transport problems facing Witney remain the same as those identified in the 1997 Local Plan, i.e
- Growing congestion on its roads due to the increase in number and use of vehicles, compounded by continued development in the town and its hinterland. In particular, congestion is created by the single river crossing at Bridge Street.
 - Growing conflict between vehicles and other road users i.e pedestrians and cyclists particularly in the town centre.
 - Environmental damage and pollution created by vehicles. This is especially damaging in the sensitive heart of the town which is a Conservation Area and some adjoining residential areas.
 - Lack of available public funding to resolve these problems.
- 9.32 In addition to the District-wide objectives, the Council's transport objectives specifically for Witney as set out in the Integrated Transport and Land Use Strategy are as follows:
- reduce the adverse impact of motorised traffic within the town as a whole, especially the most sensitive parts including the Conservation Area
 - protect and enhance the vitality and attractiveness of the town centre
 - improve accessibility to facilities within the town, especially those within the town centre, for all people including those whose mobility is limited
 - create a better environment for people on foot and good conditions for people whose mobility is limited
 - promote safe, more pleasant and more convenient conditions for cycle traffic, and for bus passengers
 - improve accessibility to Oxford
 - improve accessibility between Witney and the surrounding countryside for recreational purposes

- promote the efficient operation of all types of traffic and related activity, including parking; and
- reduce road danger throughout the town, and reduce the number and severity of road casualties.

9.33 Two road proposals from the 1997 Local Plan remain to be built, i.e the Cogges Link Road and West End Link Road. Without an additional river crossing in Witney there is little opportunity to improve conditions in the Bridge Street area.

9.34 A new A40 junction at Downs Road also proposed in the 1997 Plan remains to be built. This would serve the expansion of Witney to the west and help relieve congestion at the existing Ducklington interchange. However, the new road (Range Road) proposed in the 1997 Plan to link Downs Road with Deer Park Road across the new major employment area was opened to traffic in 1999. Policy T4 safeguards land for the new highway schemes shown on the Witney Inset Maps.

9.35 The following section sets out proposals to improve conditions in Witney that the Council will seek to secure during the plan period. Detailed proposals are being pursued through an Integrated Transport and Land Use Strategy for Witney undertaken in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council and Witney Town Council (approved December 2003).

A40 Access

Witney Proposal 11 - A40 Junction at Downs Road, Witney

A new junction with access to and from the A40 is proposed at Downs Road as shown on the Witney Inset Map.

9.36 A new junction with the A40 at Downs Road will principally serve development to the west of the town. As Witney expands, increased pressure is being placed upon the approach roads to the main A40 access, the Ducklington interchange. The proposed new interchange will directly serve the expanding

employment areas and associated heavy commercial traffic. A contribution towards the cost of the infrastructure is being secured from this committed development. Additional development in the Downs Road area (see the North Curbridge Development Area) will not be permitted, inter alia, until provision for the proposed A40 interchange and associated works have been secured.

- 9.37 The new junction will be either a grade separated or an at grade junction. The detailed design remains to be approved. A junction serving both east and west bound traffic will be sought, but full provision may be phased depending upon the junction design, timing and available funding. The new A40 access will facilitate improved public transport in the area.

Measures to Improve Facilities for Public Transport, Pedestrians and Cyclists

Proposal 12 - Traffic Management in the Central Core and Fringe Central Area

Measures to give increased priority to pedestrians, cyclists and public transport will be promoted in Witney Central Area in conjunction with Oxfordshire County Council:

- a) proposals within the central area of the town will include pedestrian priority areas, traffic calming and comprehensive traffic and parking management. Measures to discourage non-essential traffic movements through the town centre, slow the speeds of residual traffic and improve the environment and highway safety (i.e. in Church Green, Market Square, High Street (South), Langdale Gate and Corn Street).
- b) proposals within and on the fringe of the central area will include traffic management and traffic calming measures that will reduce traffic speeds and improve highway safety (i.e. in High Street Central and North, Bridge Street, West End, Welch Way (East), Hailey Road, Farmers Close, Woodgreen and Narrow Hill).

- 9.38 Witney has grown around a traditional radial road pattern which focuses on Market Square and High Street. Special provision for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport is limited. The town centre suffers from an increasing conflict between vehicles and people. Although traffic calming measures have been introduced, a steady flow of cars, lorries, buses and taxis pass through the central core. Space for pedestrians, particularly along footways, is constrained. Proposal 12 seeks to address these concerns.
- 9.39 Detailed proposals will be prepared for public consultation when funding for improvement schemes has been secured.
- 9.40 A large number of footpaths and cycle routes have been added to Witney in recent years, especially in the new development areas. The main problem is the gaps in the system, particularly in the older parts of the town.
- 9.41 The County Cycling and Walking Strategies contain a commitment to extend and improve the pedestrian and cycle network in Witney. In conjunction with Oxfordshire County Council, improvements will be sought so that continuous, attractive and safe routes are secured, particularly linking residential areas with the main destinations within the town. Some proposals are identified on the Witney Inset Maps; others will emerge through work on the Local Transport Plan and the Witney Integrated Transport and Land Use Strategy.

THE CENTRAL AREA

9.42 The Central Area Inset Map covers the town centre itself and the surrounding area which includes much of the historic core of the town. The town centre, that is the central retail area, comprises High Street and Market Square between the Witan Way junction to the north and the Buttercross area to the south with the addition of the eastern sections of Welch Way and Corn Street.

9.43 Shopping is the single most important activity in the town centre and the Council has held consistent policies to resist large-scale retail proposals outside the centre. Both the Sainsbury foodstore and the Focus DIY store were originally granted planning permission on appeal.

Changes of Use of Existing Buildings

9.44 Policies for retail development and other town centre uses are set out in the Town Centres and Shopping Chapter. Primary shopping frontages are designated on the Witney Central Area Inset Map. In the primary shopping frontages covering the major part of High Street/Market Square between Welch Way and the Town Hall, including the Woolgate and Wesley Walk, changes of use to non-retail activities will normally be restricted to upper floors only. Uses other than shops (Class A1) will only be permitted on the ground floor in cases where the particular use would be of overall benefit to the shopping activities along the frontage. Offices (Class A2) or premises which provide hot or cold food only outside shopping hours can fragment the main shopping areas. Such uses will be steered to the other shopping frontages in the town centre.

9.45 In the Buttercross/Church Green area south of Corn Street and Langdale Gate the Council will continue to resist any further intensification of shopping or commercial development.

Policy WIT1 - Buttercross and Church Green

In the area south of Corn Street and Langdale Gate defined on the Central Area Inset Map the change of use of existing premises to shopping/commercial use or any further intensification of existing shopping/commercial uses will not be allowed except where the proposed use would be incidental to the primary permitted use of the building (e.g. working at home).

9.46 Policy WIT1 continues the long established policy of the Council to protect the high environmental quality of the mainly residential area of Church Green and to prevent any undesirable expansion of the central retail area in a southerly direction.

Policy WIT2 - High Street, Bridge Street and Staple Hall

In High Street north of its junction with Witan Way and in Bridge Street and the Staple Hall area as defined on the Central Area Inset Map, the change of use of existing buildings to residential use will be permitted. Further intensification of shopping and commercial uses will not be permitted where increased traffic congestion or highway safety problems would result.

9.47 The northern part of High Street, Bridge Street and Staple Hall area (including part of West End) suffers from traffic congestion for much of the day. This will remain the only approach to the town centre from the north until the Cogges Link Road is built and provides an alternative river crossing. Servicing of commercial premises within this area adds to the severe congestion problems. The Council will encourage the conversion of properties to residential use, particularly flats, to lessen the need for on-street servicing and parking.

Mixed Use Proposals in the Central Area

Proposal 13 - West of High Street Development Areas 1 and 2, Witney

An area for comprehensive mixed use development/redevelopment is allocated to the west of High Street between Welch Way and Burford Road/Mill Street as shown on the Witney Central Area Inset Map.

Development Area 1 -

A comprehensive development for uses that will enhance and improve the vitality of the town centre which include retailing and associated uses (A1, A2 and A3), and possibly housing, recreational and community uses, together with amenity open space and substantial landscaping.

Car parking provision should be laid out in well designed landscaped areas, taking into account existing car parking use and provision for the new development. Proposals should be so designed to enable the provision of a convenient and attractive pedestrian link between the development area and High Street to the east.

Development Area 2 -

Development for uses appropriate to a town centre fringe location which include housing, community, recreational, employment, arts and tourist uses, together with appropriate car parking provision, amenity open space and substantial landscaping.

- 9.48 These proposals have their origins in the Witney Local Plan and were part of the assessment of provision for further foodstore shopping which culminated in the approval by the Secretary of State of the Sainsbury out-of-centre store.
- 9.49 Government policy guidance now emphasises the importance of steering major retail and leisure development to existing centres. The sequential test for new development is set out in PPS6 and in Structure Plan policy. Development Area 1 is well located to accommodate growth in the town centre that may be needed during the plan period.

- 9.50 Development Area 1 adjoins the existing town centre and is close to the main bus routes serving Witney and the surrounding area. Development Area 2, whilst more off-centre, lies close to public car parks and provides the opportunity for encouraging uses which are suitable for town centre fringes. Outline planning permission was granted for residential development in 2005.
- 9.51 A new distributor road between Welch Way and Burford Road/Mill Street crosses the two Development Areas and will provide primary access to proposals on the site. The road was constructed in 2005. The provision of a pedestrian link from Development Area 1 directly to High Street will be sought through use of existing or new alleyways. This will be pursued by the Council in conjunction with key landowners involved.
- 9.52 Both Areas 1 and 2 occupy a prominent location within the Witney Conservation Area. Development should be of the highest quality in appearance, content and function. Wherever practical, existing natural stone walls bounding and crossing the site, together with existing trees that form an important visual feature, should be retained and incorporated into the new development. The copse of trees between Development Areas 1 and 2 shown on the Inset Map should be protected and retained as a central landscape feature.

Proposal 14 - Rear of Methodist Church, Witney

An area for mixed use development is allocated to the rear of the Methodist Church as shown on the Witney Central Area Inset Map. Appropriate town centre uses are shopping, commercial and community uses with residential use on upper floors. Proposals should be so designed to enable the provision of a convenient and attractive pedestrian link through the site to High Street.

- 9.53 This area remains from a much larger allocation in the 1997 Plan. Most of the Methodist Church site has now been redeveloped to provide the Wesley Walk arcade of shops and ancillary development. Development of this remaining area will form an important link between the Woolgate car park and the High Street.
- 9.54 Planning permission was granted on this site in March 2003 for new retail/office units with 20 flats above.

LANDSCAPE AND OPEN SPACE

- 9.55 Witney is historically a valley settlement, surrounded on three sides by higher ground. To the north lies the New Yatt – North Leigh ridge; to the west the ridge on which West Witney has developed; and to the east the undeveloped Cogges Hill ridge, which lies close to the town centre and forms the backdrop in many views from and towards the town. A long-held policy of the Council has sought to resist any development on the Cogges Hill ridge that would be prominent in the wider landscape.
- 9.56 With the continuing expansion of Witney it is vital to ensure that the attractive setting of the town and the separate identity of nearby villages are protected. Incremental development proposals on the fringes of the existing and planned built-up limits of the town will be carefully controlled.
- 9.57 This Plan proposes a buffer area encircling the town as defined on the Witney Inset Map. Policy NE2 applies to this area. The only development that will be allowed in the buffer area will be recreational and community uses appropriate for the open countryside, the conversion and minor alteration of existing buildings and agricultural development that cannot be accommodated elsewhere.

POLICY WIT3 - Windrush in Witney

Development on land within or where it would be visible from the Windrush in Witney Policy Area defined on the Witney Inset Maps should protect and enhance the intrinsic landscape, character, ecology and cultural value of the valley.

- 9.58 The Windrush Valley through Witney is a fundamental component of the town's attractive character. Quiet countryside along the arms of the river lies surprisingly close to the busy built-up areas. The special character of the green corridor through the town will be protected and enhanced under Policy WIT3 and other relevant policies of this Plan. A management strategy for the area covered by the Windrush in Witney Project was agreed by the Council in April 2005. The wide floodplain of the River Windrush south of Witney and the A40 lies within the Lower Windrush Valley Project Area (also see the Environment Chapter and Figure 3.5).
- 9.59 The character of Witney is also substantially enhanced by historic open spaces, e.g. Woodgreen, Church Green and The Leys, and by more recent additions, eg. Cogges Green. These and other incidental open spaces, together with private open space, play a major part in enhancing this market town's character and the quality of the built environment. Many of the open spaces provide an important recreational function, including allotments, and are of local nature conservation interest. Such spaces are protected under the policies of this Plan, Policy BE4 in particular.
- 9.60 As Witney grows the Council has sought the creation of additional open spaces and woodland to complement the existing provision and to extend the character of the historic town into the new development areas.

